

Wilkinson Mill
Roosevelt and Main St.
Pawtucket
Providence County
Rhode Island

HAER No RI-2

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

RI-2

WILKINSON MILL

Date: 1810-1811

Location: Roosevelt Ave. at Main St. Pawtucket, Providence
County Rhode Island

Built by: Oziel Wilkinson

Owned by: Originally: Oziel Wilkinson
Presently: Old Slater Mill Association

Significance: Representative example of an early 19th century mill,
the Wilkinson Mill was one of the first mills in the
United States to be steam powered. It is also one of
the first mills in the country to produce worsted wool.

Historian: G.B. Kulik

Transmitted by: Dan Clement, 1983

The noted Pawtucket artisan, Oziel Wilkinson, built this three and one-half story stone mill in 1810-1811. Oziel's son David, put the machinery in place and, no doubt, built the steam engine which originally supplemented the mill's water power capacity. The Wilkinson Mill was one of the first steam powered mills in the state, and one of the first in the country.

David Wilkinson was an important and creative machinist, the American inventor of the industrial lathe, and a key figure in the development of the power loom. It was Wilkinson who built the most successful of the early American power looms, the so-called "Scotch Loom", from patterns supplied from its inventor, William Gilmour. Wilkinson operated a machine shop in the mill from 1811 to 1829 when he along with other members of his family, went out of business in the depression of that year.

Since 1829, the mill was used for a variety of purposes; woolen manufacture, knitting, braiding, and the manufacture of leather machinery and jeweler's tools. In this century it has been owned by the Pawtucket Electric Light Company and by a furniture warehouse. In the early 1970's the Old Slater Mill Association undertook the mill's restoration and adaptive reuse. The Slater Mill Historic Site built (1970's) an historically correct breast wheel and governor, and operate a machine shop, placed on the first floor of the restored structure, on the power of the Blackstone River.